

via pacis

The Voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

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Catholic Worker Faith and Resistance Retreat

by Danielle Steger

This year's retreat was hosted by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community on St. Patrick's Day weekend, March 15-17. Testimony of faith and ideas of action towards resistance were the core themes. Our guest speakers shared how to educate those around us while witnessing the truth. The energy from the crowd, both young and old, was shared as stories were told, food was served, and encouragement was given.

Mentors were found over breakfast and discussions were had over how to best stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters. Learned experience and wisdom was given to those starting their path on the Catholic Worker journey.

A small and intimate group, consisting of young and old Catholic Workers, friends of the Catholic Workers, and Veterans for Peace members gathered at Trinity United Methodist Church on Friday night. Our presenters were Sisters Ardeth Platte and Carol Gilbert, Plowshares activists, long time Jonah House community members, and current Washington DC Catholic Workers. Frank participated in the "Gods of Metal Plowshares" action with Ardeth and Carol in May 1998.

After breakfast on Saturday, we had presentations by two of the four Catholic Worker Pipeline Valve Turners from Minnesota and spoke to four of the Kings Bay Plowshares Catholic Workers via Skype. Wow! This was accompanied by lots of personal sharing.

Our Saturday night program was with Kathy Kelly from Voices for Creative Nonviolence. No one connects the dots between drones and the people they kill better than Kathy! She is so real.

The retreat began on Sunday at 9 a.m. with Mass at Dingman House. Madeleine presided, and a solid group of Des Moines Catholic Workers, plus Sisters Carol and Ardeth all helped lead the singing and readings.

The retreat ended on Sunday with a rally and nonviolent direct action at the Iowa Air National Guard Drone Command Center. Sunday's rally featured a few notable speakers. The speakers included Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, Dominican Sisters Carol Gilbert and Ardeth Platte, David Logsdon and Michael Madden of Minnesota Veterans for Peace, Jakob Whitson of the Des Moines Catholic Worker, and Gil Landolt of the "Bill Bassinger" Des Moines Veterans for Peace chapter.

The rally ended with a nonviolent direct action witness, as protesters walked onto the base. They were led by eight Catholic Workers and Veterans for Peace members who were risking arrest in an attempt to shut down the site. They were arrested while blocking the main entrance gate with their message from St. Patrick himself: "In Christ there is no killing!"

The brave eight that were arrested: Steve Jacobs from Columbia, Missouri, Mike Miles from Anathoth Catholic Worker Farm, Wisconsin, Gabe McMahan, a roaming Catholic Worker, and Des Moines Catholic Workers and members of the Des Moines chapter of Veterans for Peace, Frank Cordaro, Ruth Hart, Ed Bloomer, Jakob Whitson, and Al Burney.

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Retreat Reflections

by Sister Ardeth Platte and Sister Carol Gilbert

Our response to the request by Frank Cordaro to do a presentation to the Midwest Catholic Worker Communities gathered for a faith and resistance retreat was music to our ears! We had previously attended the Pacific Life Community and Atlantic Life Community meetings to share the hope-filled message of young people of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) who are dauntlessly, fearlessly, and coura-



Some of the retreat participants after Sunday morning mass

geously working for a nuclear-free world. We longed to do the same for the Midwest peacemakers with whom we had shared many years in the Michigan Life Community and Lakes and Prairies Life Community before moving to the East Coast in 1995. What blessings we encountered! The tours through the Philip Berrigan, Rachel Corrie, Chelsea Manning, and Dingman Houses where we met all of the amazing Catholic Worker servants of the homeless and resisters who witness at the Iowa National Guard Armed Drone Command Center (six miles from these houses) strengthened our conviction in Dorothy Day's ongoing fidelity to the works of love in action.

We spoke the desires of ICAN and delivered the "Treaty to Abolish Nuclear Weapons" to the Drone Command Center's military security at the gate. ICAN consists of 532 peace/justice groups in more than 103 nations. Their organizing effort began

in 2007, leading to their active participation in the General Assembly. It is led by Elayne White-Gomez of Costa Rica and calls for the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, leading to their total elimination. We were privileged to attend all of ICAN's work during March, June, and July, 2017 at the United Nations, all of their planning meetings, the celebrations of the Treaty's passage vote, and the ICAN reception of the Nobel Peace Prize. The work continues for ratification like all the treaties before it.

We connect all the issues of these times to this abolition treaty, including the enormous military industrial complex budget, economic disparity, corporation profits and wealth in the hands of one percent of the people, wall-building to stop immigration and refugees, environmental devastation, extravagant military use of fossil fuel, disasters, pollution and contamination, poverty along with the lack of basic human services in the United States and the rest of the world, limiting voting rights, blocking unionization, waging wars directly or selling nuclear and conventional weapon carriers and weapons for war-making, withdrawing from many environmental

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Loaves and Fishes; Clementines and Cake

by Kateri Boucher

It was Friday evening at dinnertime, and I walked into Dingman House just in time for the 6pm community dinner. In the midst of the kitchen's bustling chaos, I asked if there was anything I could do to help and was quickly assigned the role of chicken-wing-server. With tongs in hand, I began to serve guests as they came by with their plates, one after one, in a long line that went far out the small kitchen.

As the line went on and I continued to serve, it started becoming clear that there might not be enough food. Or rather, there would probably be enough for all the community guests, but probably not enough for myself and the other retreat attendants, most of whom were waiting at the end of the line until all the guests had eaten first.

Lo and behold, by the time the first workers showed up in line, we had run out of salad and were near-out of chicken wings. I felt my own stomach grumble at the realization that I wouldn't get to eat a full dinner, but I didn't mind too much, and other workers and volunteers didn't seem to bat an eye. "There's still plenty of cake!" one volunteer offered. And indeed, there was still cake! There were a few clementines left too, which folks split up as we filled our plates with the food that remained.

As I sat down to eat my own plate of chocolate cake and clementines, I was struck by how fitting it was to commence our weekend with that meal. We began the retreat of "faith and resistance" by actually practicing values that are at the core of the Catholic Workers movement: living (and eating) simply; allowing those with the most need to be first in line; and trusting in the (sometimes miraculous, often mundane) abundance of community.

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c/o Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines, IA 50305
515-214-1030

EDITORS

Jade Suganuma, Jakob Whitson, Patrick Stall

LAYOUT

Jade Suganuma, Jakob Whitson, Ryna-Ria Ignacio

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THE DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, shower, or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

BECOMING A DES MOINES CATHOLIC WORKER

We are open to new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our website: www.dmcatholicworker.org.

MAILING ADDRESS

Des Moines Catholic Worker
PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

BISHOP DINGMAN HOUSE

(Drop-in Center and Business Phone)
1310 7th St. Des Moines, IA 50314
515-214-1030

Monday CLOSED
Tuesday 3pm-6:30pm
Wednesday CLOSED
Thursday 3pm-6:30pm
Friday 3pm-6:30pm
Saturday 12pm-2pm
Sunday 3pm-6:30pm

PHIL BERRIGAN HOUSE

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781
frank.cordaro@gmail.com

RACHEL CORRIE HOUSE

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-330-2172

CHELSEA MANNING HOUSE

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-777-2180

COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Norman Searah, Ed Bloomer, Annie Patton, Charlie Faraday, Celestino Ramirez, Gil Landolt, Al Burney, Frank Cordaro, Patrick Stall, Jade Suganuma, Ruth Hart, Jakob Whitson, Ryna-Ria Ignacio, Danielle Steger, Madeleine Terry

WEEKLY COMMUNITY MASS

Fridays, 7:00 pm. Berrigan House.
All are welcome. Call to confirm.

MONTHLY VETERANS FOR PEACE MEETING

Berrigan House. For more information, contact Gil Landolt at peacevet@hotmail.com or call 515-333-2180.

WEEKLY AA MEETING

Fridays, 4:00 pm, Berrigan house

THE CHIAPAS PROJECT

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com

As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile. -Dorothy Day



Editorial: A Note on Prison Abolition

by Jade Suganuma

An integral part of the Catholic Worker Movement is raising the voices of marginalized people. Whether they are the guests we serve at our houses of hospitality or international victims of colonization and American militarism, the people we strive to lift up are often targets of state violence, their stories and experiences ill-portrayed or completed ignored by mainstream media. Another group of marginalized people that is afflicted by state violence every second of every day is the over 2.2 million people incarcerated in the United States. Just as folks in the Catholic Worker movement advocate for individual victims of war alongside the bigger picture of ending the United States’ military empire, we should also be advocating for incarcerated people’s rights while keeping in mind the bigger picture of bringing about an end to this country’s current prison system.

The plight of incarcerated people is directly linked to state violence and oppression, both of which are common targets for Catholic Worker resistance actions. However, the issues of incarcerated people are often overlooked in other mainstream activist circles. One reason for this is the stigma around incarcerated people as “criminals” who have done something wrong, and are therefore deserving of some sort of punishment. However, a closer look into the incarcerated person’s situation will reveal that according to the most recent Bureau of Prisons statistics, 45.7 percent of people in prison were convicted of nonviolent drug-related crimes, while offenders committing violent acts such as murder, assault, or sex offenses make up only 13 percent of the entire prison population.

To first address those individuals who have committed abhorrent actions against others, it is necessary to understand that the current prison system fails to provide rehabilitation in any sense. On the contrary, being locked in a cage often makes people more aggressive and violent. Prisons do not provide resources to help people understand why their actions were wrong or hurtful, and they certainly do not encourage positive humanitarian growth.

This is proven in the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which report that 68 percent of prisoners that are released commit another crime within the next three years. This trend is also clearly evident at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, where we see many of our guests get run through the prison system time and time again for similar violations. Prison is not rehabilitation. It is a system that strips people of their human dignity by locking them in cages, cutting them off from social connections, and forcing them to work as slaves for the state or private corporations.

If the state truly cared about incarcerated people as humans, it would, at the very least, pay them a living wage so that they could start saving up money to start life anew and make good investments once they are released. Instead, prisons are the only place in the country where slavery is still legal, and once released, formerly incarcerated people are forced to check a box on employment applications that will lower their chances of being hired. The so-called justice system in this country is absolutely devoid of justice for any person that comes into contact with it.

To address the larger picture, the vast majority of incarcerated people have committed nonviolent crimes as a result of a lack of resources necessary for survival. Money is the key ingredient to surviving in a capitalist economy, but not everyone happens to be born into wealth or have access to opportunities to achieve wealth. In order to obtain money in such desperate situations, people are forced to turn to drug, weapon, and sex trades, alongside theft, migrating to a new country as soon as possible, and a myriad of other acts deemed “illegal” by the state, despite the fact that the capitalist state is at fault for failing to provide people with the necessary means to survive in the first place. Therefore, it is not the people who should be found guilty and sentenced to prison, but rather the capitalist state which should be found guilty on account of making it impossible for people not born into wealth to meet their basic needs.

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Poetry Corner

The 13th Amendment

Original spoken word piece by Travis John Wolfkill
Penned during a seven day lockdown at Iowa State Penitentiary:

Some say we’re created for slave reasons
By an alien species
Human beings designed to be subservient
Stellar origins not woke to the firmament

Sentences.
Periods of oppression.
Paragraphs. Statistics. Repeat offenders
Public defenders pretend to represent us
Adversarial collusion their profession
Plea bargains offered like ligatures
Bound to a system that exploits its denizens

Half the public thinks bread and water
Is a suitable sustenance
A proper punishment for criminals
They say Law and Order
I say they want to be rid of us

Detainees of the Prison Industrial Complex
Incarcerated individuals
Inmates and Convicts
A sub culture silenced by sirens
From a patrol car to a hole

Locked
A journey through the Inferno
No bail
No love

Suck It

Original poem by Travis John Wolfkill
Penned in Iowa State Penitentiary on August 4, 2016:

The theory is you will read
Anything having to do with sex
So suck it
This one’s about politics

Politicians kneel to corporate monsters
Turn around and check your tags
They branded the masses
Does the DOW dictate your mood
Do the stocks keep you in bonds, too?

Why do you think
They call it white and blue Collar?
So drink your coffee
And earn that dollar

This one’s about politics

A Culture of Violence: The Roots of the Migrant Caravan

by Richard Flamer

In 1990 I was in Guatemala taking pictures. I was invited to a site called Rio Negro by a forensic friend to take photos of a massacre of more than 700 women and children some years before.

The men had been gathered some weeks before and marched to a nearby military base where they disappeared. That is, they were never seen or heard from again.

The teenage boys were warned by their mothers to stay out in the nearby jungle to avoid a similar fate.

A few weeks later, while the boys in the jungle watched, a civil patrol came to the village and started the massacre. After several hours of the rampage, a number of the women were forced to dance and watch while the militia played music, drank, and kept killing.

Running low on ammunition, the soldiers started bashing in the heads of the children. That is, they grabbed them by their heels and swung them against the rocks.

An earlier investigation nearby had been finished some months earlier by the United Nations. The result of this earlier investigation was completed and then buried in the archives at the behest of the United States not to be made public.

By the time of the Rio Negro investigation, the Catholic Church, through the offices of Archbishop Gerardi and Bishop Ricardo Flores, had found the funding to continue the work of the forensic team. The results of the Catholic Team were made public at its conclusion and later published as part of a larger four volume work called “Nunca

Mas,” or “Never Again.”

The results were clear. A wealthy landowner, whose brother was a colonel in the army, wanted the land where the village was situated to add to his neighboring farm. The army colonel ordered the massacre to get the land for his brother.

The colonel, along with most of the upper ranks of the military in Guatemala, had been trained at the United States School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia.

In San Salvador, also during the 1990s at the University of Central America, four Jesuits had done much research on the killings and massacres of civilians in the civil war. Their work had been published internationally. Three of the four were killed along with their housekeeper and the daughter of the woman by soldiers sent by Colonel Rene D’Auboisson (the same man who ordered the killing of Bishop Oscar Romero). The soldiers and the colonel had also been trained at the School of Assassins in Georgia.

In Honduras, the United States built a large base near Palmerola. From that base the United States brought in Arms and planes to promote the war in Nicaragua. In the 1980s, the United States started sending officers from the Honduran Army and the National Police Force to Ft. Benning. The reign of terror in Honduras was accompanied by large scale fraud in not limited to only arms dealing. An entire paper plant was stolen as it came off of three transport planes and later was delivered to one of the Honduran generals who still runs the plant today. The arms ended up flowing to El Salvador and Guatemala City. At one point, Guatemala City had over 40 warehouses filled with United States arms

that had been delivered, purportedly for the use of the Honduran military.

As the wars wound down, the United States started cracking down on domestic gang violence, specifically, the major Salvadoran gangs who had come up to the United States fleeing the violence in their own country. They were met with a different kind of violence when they encountered the “Crips” and the “Bloods.” The Salvadoran kids formed the Salva Maratrucha and other gangs to combat the regional gangs of Southern California and Texas.

The United States started deporting the Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan gang members back to their countries of origin, where they continued their violence. Though not trained by the School of the Americas, they managed to get their training on American streets.

A few countries have managed to curtail the United States-fueled violence, but what of the thousands of land mines left behind in the Vietnamese landscape? The mines that even now, over 40 years after the war, continue to kill and maim children?

The drug cartels have been armed for years by United States’ companies, or they purchased their arms from the armies of the regions. Now, with a recent executive order signed by President Trump, there will be even more arms shipped to Central America. Specifically, Trump has negated that arms sales go through the state department which reviews Human Rights issues and transferred the sales to only the commerce department with no revision by Congress.

Is it any wonder that migrants are fleeing this culture of violence?

Second Annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat and Witness

by Frank Cordaro

This year’s December retreat was special for me. We were led by Wes Howard-Brook, a scripture scholar and fellow Catholic Worker from Seattle. Wes wrote two books that rocked my Bible world, “Come Out My People! God’s Call Out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond” and “Empire Baptized: How the Church Embraced What Jesus Rejected (Second-Fifth Centuries).”

The first book gives people a lens to read the books of the Bible with authentic eyes, as they were read by their original readers. The second book tells how the followers who produced the New Testament became the Church of the Roman Empire and sold out to Jesus, the radical, mystic “dead Jew on a tree” Jerusalem rabble from the first century leading up to 70 AD and the destruction of the second temple. After hosting the retreat, the Des Moines Catholic Worker and Veterans for Peace led a short witness and “line crossing” at the main entrance to the Iowa Air National Guard Drone Command Center in Des Moines. The witness was cut short because of the cold, wind, and ice conditions, but it was still a sight to be seen.

The group held two banners with graphics. One read, “Herod Killed the Infants (Matt. 2:16) Today Des Moines Armed Drone Command Kills them too!” The second read, “Celebrate Christmas ... Shut Down Des Moines’ Drone Command Center!” There was one arrest. I entered onto the base, walked up the drive to the main gate, and was immediately stopped by two National Guard base

security personnel, one with gun. I was handcuffed and detained in the guard gate house until the Des Moines police arrived. Soon after the police arrived, they arrested me for trespassing, put me in a police car, and drove me off site. My arresting officer decided to give me a citation, similar to a speeding ticket, to avoid me having to spend a night in jail. Then they gave me a ride home. We talked about the troubles on the corner of 7th St. and Indiana Ave., a shared concern for both the Des Moines police and us, the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

I was given a date to appear in Polk County Court (January 17). I appeared and pled guilty to trespass charges before Magistrate Judge Dickinson in Polk County Traffic Court. Judge Dickinson fined me the maximum for the charge, \$1,000 plus court cost. There is no jail time that can be given for this charge.

While this may seem like no big deal, things can change. The local county attorney, John Sarcone (who is also my Dowling High School classmate), may decide to charge us with a more serious offense that could result in “line crossers” going to jail. If history means anything, it’s more likely that the federal attorney with the National Guard will decide to start enforcing the “ban and bar” letters they give to everyone who gets arrested. I have at least eleven of these “ban and bar” letters dating back to the early 2000s!

Regardless of law enforcement’s decisions, we will continue to perform our moral witnesses until a peaceful world comes into existence. Many thanks to all who attended our Feast of the Holy Innocents events!



Fr. Jim Murphy and Cassandra Dixon, Mary Catholic Worker House in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, and Rev. Mr. Denny Davis (not pictured) deacon and anti-death penalty advocate from Sioux Falls, South Dakota outside the main entrance of Offutt Air Force Base and the home of the STRATCOM.

STRATCOM and Offut AFB Witness Update

As we traveled to Omaha, Nebraska, there continued to be frequent news about the two separate deaths of Guatemalan children in United States custody at the Mexican border. These children got in the middle of a power struggle of fear where people can reside. Three of us were traveling to Offutt Air Force Base outside of Omaha to remember the Biblical story of power and fear that ended in children’s deaths. December 28 marks the annual commemoration of King Herod’s order to kill babies who would be the age of baby Jesus out of fear of a future rival king.

Our trip was motivated by the decades long witness initiated by the Des Moines Catholic Worker at Offutt, where the United States makes plans and is prepared to execute a nuclear war. Fear and power have developed responses from stones and clubs to spears and guns and bombs and nuclear missiles. Some infants to octogenarians would be vaporized by

nuclear weapons. Some would be killed by the blast. Others would have slow deaths over decades from radiation.

Standing beyond a runway, near the highway past Offutt, the three of us stood with the same simple statement: Herod’s fear and power continues with barbaric threats to annihilate human, animal, and plant life on a massive scale. We read the Biblical story, we offered the cry from Ramah, we offered the small whispering voice that love and solidarity need to replace the violence of fear and power.

Fr. Jim Murphy “crossed the line” and trespassed at Offutt last August 6 and received a “ban and bar” letter. He was released and intends to return to Offutt next August 6 to repeat his line crossing.

Contact Father Jim Murphy at <jimmurphy@centurylink.net> 608 617 7379

St. Mary’s Parish, Portage, Wisconsin

Seven Women Walked into the Vatican: A Mission Walked Out

by Maria Bergh

Catholic Worker Women pilgrimaged to witness outside the Vatican Summit on the Protection of the Minor. I was fortunate to travel with Mary Beth Appel and Johanna Berrigan (House of Grace CW & St Francis Inn, Philadelphia, PA), Alice McGary (Mustard Seed CW Farm in Ames, IA), Mary Rider (Fr. Charlie Mulholland CW, Garner, NC), Claire Schaeffer-Duffy (Ss. Francis and Therese CW, Worcester, MA), and Kim Williams (Sadako Sasaki CW, Norfolk, VA). The Catholic Worker is a lay ecclesial movement; we, the laity, do the works of mercy, and for that we are recognized by the Pope. When the Catholic Church is performing acts of war, raping, and lying, should we not show up as we would for any other injustice?

Dorothy Day, foundress of the Catholic Worker, traveled to Rome during the Second Vatican Council to ask that conscientious objection be recognized by church teaching. We followed her example, asking for tangible accountability, the inclusion of survivors, women and lay people. We did not expect to be noticed. Seven women walked into the Vatican City... it sounds like a joke. Instead, we were immediately and continuously approached by the press, who were as shut out of the proceedings as we were. It was a witness full of valuable lessons about faith, religion, and impact. The lessons learned are as follows:

1. Survivors deserve support. We joined brave witnesses from #EndClergyAbuse who shared their stories of sexual abuse by clergy. There is no easy way to relive trauma. Please pray for all victims of sexual abuse and support ECA financially as you are able. Support the churches in your diocese marked by sexual abuse, as well as social ministries for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. We, the laity, can make reparations for our church through service and wit-

ness.

2. Where two or three are gathered, Christ is there. Relationships, particularly prayerful ones, are powerful. Ask: who is interested in, asking about, and working on the issues you care about? The answers will lead you to companions on your journey, and in your midst, God will work.

3. Protest works. Before I became an activist, I thought that protestors were single-mindedly dedicated to their cause (and sometimes we are). For this



pilgrimage, we barely had time to write a statement and order t-shirts. Everyone can manage that! Discern with friends: what is troubling your hearts? Take a small action in love: hold a vigil (or a sign) with some friends, write a note to the pope or your bishop, or run for parish council.

4. Division is not the status quo. An Italian Catholic mentioned to us that all Catholics believe in the sanctity of life, but only in the United States does this divide the church. While we were in Rome, the United Methodist Church was debating the inclusion

of LGBTQIA+ people, and the result was institutionalized division. Ecclesial divisions are biblical (faith or works?), but not the status quo. Division is created to build or maintain power for some within a group, especially the power of righteousness, the power of the pharisees, the power Jesus challenged. Let us name what divides us and reconcile that we light the whole world.

5. The church is the laity. We said this, the press asked about it, and finally, we heard it from Pope Francis and the bishops. We were the only lay people the press could identify for comment, which led them to question the importance of this issue. We all care deeply about clergy abuse, but we also feel disenfranchised. Priests and bishops can't solve clergy abuse alone; the church's problems are our problems.

6. Clericalism is a grave danger, and clerics can't save us from it. At Mass we recognize the presence of God in the readings, the eucharist, the priest, and the laity. In each synod, summit, and council, each of these elements are relied upon for inspiration and discernment, with the notable exception of the laity. Mark Coleridge, the Archbishop of Brisbane, told us that Pope Francis is looking for a healthy decentralization built on new relationships between local churches and Rome. We are all needed to re-envision a healthy, accountable church.

7. Pray for unity, love, and devotion to healing, asking for God's blessing and help. May the spirit renew our hearts, our church, and our world.

Maria Bergh is a Midwest Catholic Worker, writer, spiritual director, and farmer. She also facilitates change and community building through www.we-build.agency and www.justdesign.coop

Catholic Worker Farm Retreat: Catholic Worker Farms are Thriving

by Jakob Whitson and Ryna-Ria Ignacio

The Catholic Worker Movement started during the Great Depression. From the Gospels arose a three-pronged approach to alleviating the ails of a increasingly technological, materialistic, consumeristic, and capitalistic society that often let the least of us fall through the cracks; houses of hospitality, farming communities, and resistance to all traits of empire.

Catholic Worker farms have a long history in the movement. Many of the initial farms were failures: living on the land is not easy. Juggling hospitality and farm work continues to be a challenge, along with generating enough donations and income to keep a farm going.

Today, young and old Catholic Worker farms are thriving. Many of the farms are taking cues from permaculture and sustainability practices, as being a steward of the land is part of the Aims and Means of the Catholic Worker. For example, Anathoth Farm in Luck, Wisconsin began using regenerative farming practices such as alternate grazing for steers, pastured pigs, and the creation of silvopasture. Some farms also choose to be off-grid, such as the White Rose Catholic Worker in La Plata, Missouri.

This year, we were fortunate to

attend a Catholic Worker Farm Retreat at Anathoth Farm. Shay O'Toole and Mike Miles began the retreat by discussing current practices and projects of their farms. Retreat goers were also blessed with a presentation by the Four Necessity Valve Turners, a recent direct action to combat climate change complacency.

The retreat featured delicious food, including produce and meat from Catholic Worker Farms. Many roundtable discussions were held, including topics such as Catholic Worker farm profitability, social media, song sharing, NATO resistance work, raising children on Catholic Worker farms, Laudate Si' discussion, aging in the Catholic Worker, and a tour of Anathoth Farm.

Many farming communities attended the retreat. Those present were from St. Francis Farm (Lacona, New York), Earth Abides Catholic Worker Farm (Sheep Ranch, California), Mustard Seed Farm (Ames, Iowa), Strangers & Guests Catholic Worker Community (Maloy, Iowa), BitterRoot Catholic Worker Farm (Stevensville, Montana), St. Isidore Catholic Worker Farm (Cuba City, Wisconsin), and Lake City Catholic Worker Farm (Lake City, Minnesota). Houses of Hospitality Catholic Workers were also in attendance, many of which have community gardens.

We danced, we laughed, and we devoured delicious food!

THE NUNS, THE PRIESTS, AND THE BOMBS

TIMELY NEW DOCUMENTARY

"The Nuns, The Priests, and The Bombs" follows the federal cases against Plowshares who were imprisoned for undertaking protests at the Y-12 National Nuclear Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee and at the U.S. Navy's Trident nuclear submarine base near Seattle. The film also follows efforts at the United Nations to negotiate the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

"How can we be human and co-exist with weapons that have one purpose, one mission-- the destruction of all humanity? The answer-- through acts of nonviolent resistance and the creation of community-- is crystal clear and klaxon loud in Helen Young's, "The Nuns, The Priests and The Bombs." Anyone mired in hopelessness and ennui about the plight of the world (and isn't that all of us at one point or another) needs to see this film and then find-- or build-- a community that will lift them into action and connection. Thank you to the filmmakers (and the activists who are the subject of the film) for reminding that we rediscover our own humanity by working to protect the human community!!"

-**Frida Berrigan**, author "It Runs In The Family: On Being Raised by Radicals and Growing Into Rebellious Motherhood"

DVDs are available for public screenings or home use.

Please contact:

Helen Young Productions, 245 W. 55th St. Room 403, New York, N.Y. 10019 p# 646-256-4228 hyoungnyc@gmail.com.

Americanism: the Single-Most Threatening “-Ism” on the Planet

By Frank Cordaro

I noticed a post on Facebook on February 17 remembering the anniversary of a United States-led one-day massacre in 1991 that killed over 1,000 disarmed retreating Iraqi soldiers. I shared the post with the following note:

“It was a war crime then, and it still is. However, we can’t keep up remembering this because so many other United States-led war crimes continue to happen on a daily basis. Just as some view mass gun killings in the United States, which seem to happen one after the other, such death and violence is now the new normal.”

We don’t really remember the war crimes committed by our country. The best we can do is list them.

This should be a problem for any Christian in the United States. The core of our faith in Jesus is based on our ability to remember Him; in the breaking of the bread, in the serving of the poor. Remembering Him in today’s America means being a peacemaker in a total war culture, living lives devoted to making things right for all who suffer unjustly, one person at a time. We Americans can’t follow Jesus and be pro-rich, pro-war and pro U.S.A. at the same time. Los Angeles Catholic Worker, Jeff Detrick, wrote years ago that us baby boomers must commit class suicide if we are to follow Jesus.

What we are up against is the newest version of what St. Paul called the “powers and principalities.” Americanism is as measurable as racism, sexism, classism and all the other “isms” that plague the human race, only in Americanism, we are so extreme in our destructive behavior. It is a unique time in human history where our very existence as Americans is the problem.

In our post-World War II atomic bomb era, the human race and the life forces on the planet are at risk like never before. Not by God, not by nature, but by our own hands! This is a first in the human experience. Americanism exists because the United States has almost complete control and dominance over the systems of death by its overwhelming global military superiority and our continued dominance of the global financial systems.

70 years into this new and perilous human predicament, we’ve morphed beyond the military and financial systems. Now we have organized our human systems needed to meet our most basic human needs like food, water, health, and education to be based on the same lies and systems that are killing the planet. It’s a nightmare reality, of “Book of Revelations” proportions, a global pyramid scheme as old as Pharaoh’s Empire, as murderous as the Romans in Jesus’ time. Only now, it’s total, it’s global, it’s immediate (minutes away by the atomic bomb) and inevitable (within a generation or two by just living our modern lives in ways which harm our natural environment)!

As a member of the baby boomer generation in this country, I am painfully aware that we have lived our whole lives off of the ill-gotten gains of World War II and the United States empire that followed. There is no more identifiable group of human beings more responsible for the destruction of the planet than we American baby boomers.

The human race is killing the planet. Every fourth grader knows this. Further, we Americans are the most responsible for this reality, yet we are the least able to see this truth about ourselves. Of all the “-isms” we suffer in this culture of extremes, Americanism is the most dangerous because it is the most denied! Any work we Americans try to do to address racism, sexism, classism and all the other “-isms” is bound to be too little too late, too short sighted for what really needs to be done.

This is why the witness and message from my old friend, long-time Catholic Worker, and deportee, Ciaron O’Reilly, is so important!

Ciaron’s been a Catholic Worker for over 40 years. Born in Australia with Irish citizenship, Ciaron helped start a Catholic Worker in Australia in the 1970s. He came to the United States for a few years, checking out the folks at Jonah House and visiting other Catholic Workers. He participated in his first Plowshares action in 1991 during the Gulf War. Ciaron was a member of the “ANZUS Plowshares” group which attacked a B-52 bomber heading to the Middle East at Griffiss AFB near Utica, New York. He ended up doing 13 months of jail time before being deported from the United States forever!

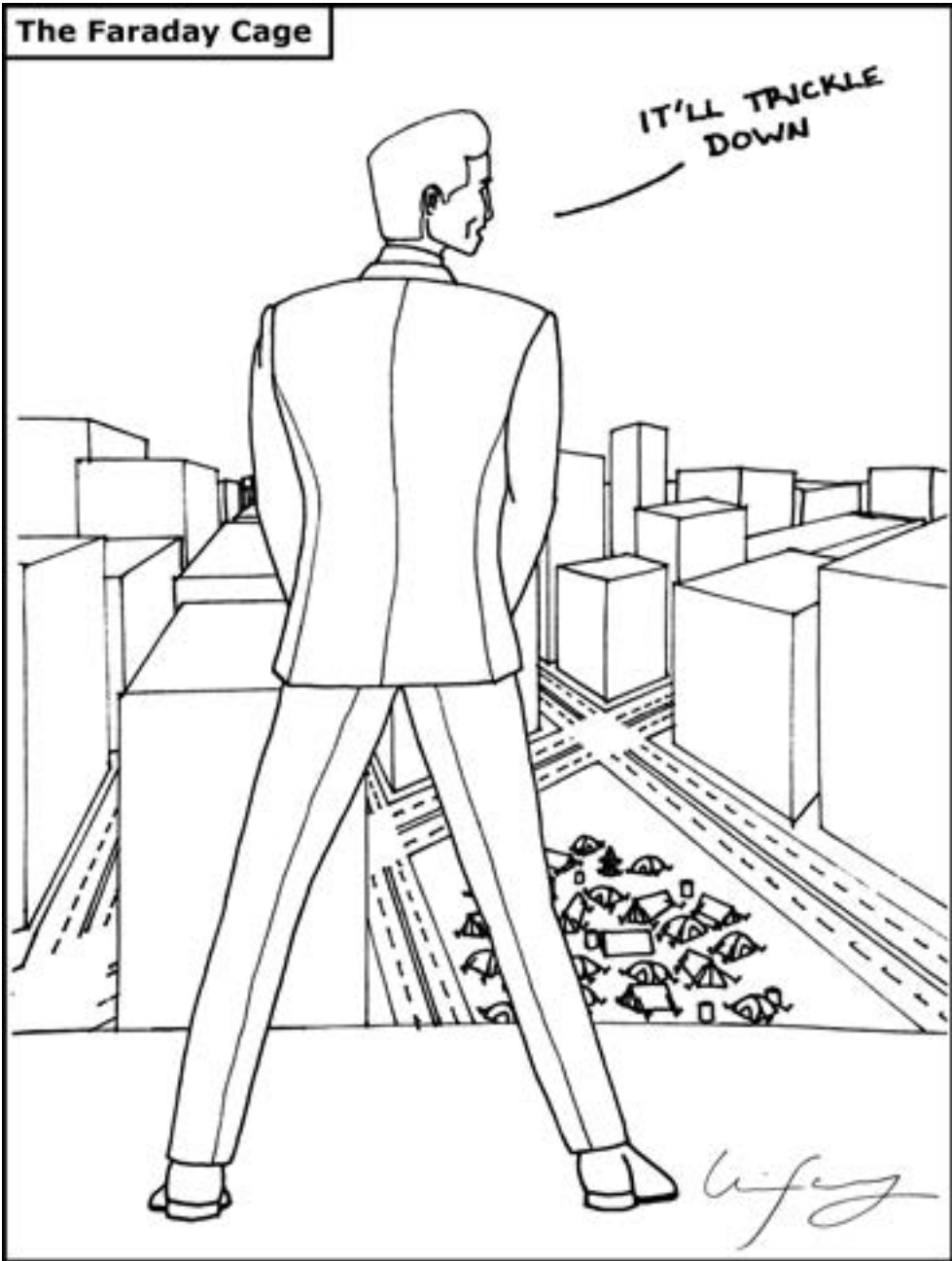
Ciaron went on to do two more plowshares

witnesses, the 1998 “Jabiluka Plowshares” in Australia and the 2006 Pitstop Plowshares in Ireland. He’s been in and out of Catholic Worker communities the whole time. When not at risk himself, he stands in solidarity and support with those who are.

In recent years, Ciaron has embraced the cause of Julian Assange, who is the founder of WikiLeaks and has dedicated his life and liberty to exposing not only the crimes of the American government abroad, but also mass surveillance here in the United States. For a number of months, he and others have been maintaining a 24/7 vigil at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, where Assange has taken sanctuary from being arrested and extradited from the United States to face what is sure to be a political prosecution.

Ciaron’s perspective from the United Kingdom adds another layer to our indictment of the American system. From his vigil site in London, he berates American imperialism and the apparent inability of the political Left in this country to effectively counter our own government’s militarism: “It’s like no one has heard of Rwanda over there, or that Colin Powell was due to lead the 1991 MLK March in Atlantic, but was too busy incinerating Iraqi kids to make the gig. Really...in the United States, to most of the rest of the world, you’re all Yanks until proven innocent! The U. S. Left [was] once inspiring [but] is now literally... the love child of neoliberalism and postmodernism....just another American Heresy.”

At the time of this article’s writing, Chelsea Manning has been thrown in jail again for her refusal to testify against Julian Assange, while Assange himself has been illegally arrested in the Equadorian Embassy in London, despite his Equadorian citizenship. United States drones are raining death upon civilians in Somalia, Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Venezuela’s people live in fear of American bombs and American bullets. Ciaron’s vigil and testament reminds us here, in the heart of the American empire, of the moral necessity of witness against the violence of the American state upon the people of the developing world and those who, like Assange and Manning, would seek to expose its heresies for the world to see.



This issue of the Via Pacis features the first in a series of cartoons depicting the aims and means of the Catholic Worker movement. Each cartoon will be ripe with snark and real heavy on the sass. I hope you enjoy them!
- Charlie Faraday

The first aim of the Catholic Worker movement is to live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ. When we examine our capitalist society’s prevailing concern for acquisition and material interests and emphasis on respectability and mediocrity, we find it far from God’s justice.

In economics, private and state capitalism bring about an unjust distribution of wealth, for the profit motive guides decisions. Those in power live off the sweat of others’ brows, while those without power are robbed of a just return for their work. Usury (the charging of interest above administrative costs) is a major contributor to the wrongdoing intrinsic to this system. We note, especially, how the world debt crisis leads poor countries into greater deprivation and a dependency from which there is no foreseeable escape. Here at home, the number of hungry and homeless and unemployed people rises in the midst of increasing affluence.

Visions of What Is To Come in Venezuela

by Patrick Stall

The United States has been attempting to overthrow the democratically elected Bolivarian government of Venezuela since 2002, when it sponsored a failed coup attempt. Since then, the American policy towards Venezuela has vacillated between economic and political attempts at destabilization and a grudging acceptance of the Bolivian government's legitimacy. With a crop of right-wing regimes taking power in Venezuela's neighboring countries, and an increasingly reactionary American regime under Trump, the United States has added open attempts to overthrow the Venezuelan government, crippling economic sanctions already in place. While Juan Guido's American-backed attempt to claim power has failed for now, it seems that the direction of the United States policy towards the country is increasingly interventionist in the near term. It is impossible to predict exactly how deep and violent that intervention will be. United States history allows us to predict with some clarity what the articulation of that intervention will look like. US military intervention can take any form and escalate or deescalate, but in general, the scope of that intervention falls into three categories: Full military intervention, use of proxy forces, and the use of limited military force, like airstrikes, drones, and cruise missiles.

1) Full-scale military intervention. Seen before in 2003 Iraq, 2001 Afghanistan, and 1963 Vietnam.

Under Obama, the United States generally turned away from using traditional invasion and occupation as a method of regime change. While Trump has largely followed this policy thus far, a large-scale war may be an attractive option if he finds himself in serious political jeopardy at home, or if his poll numbers are wanting in the 2020 election. The United States could use any small pretext: Venezuela's acceptance of military aid from Russia, the killing of some protestors, or any incident that vaguely signifies escalation against the United States could be used as a pretext, and, with cooperation from Columbia and Brazil, Trump could decide to invade Venezuela directly.

Venezuela's military, while no match for the United States and its South American allies in a conventional war, is a large, professional force that is fiercely loyal to the government. The United States might be able to claim military victory after a few weeks, but the Venezuelan military and paramilitary collectivos will likely mount a guerilla war from the mountains and rainforests that cover Venezuela. This war could last decades. A direct military intervention would mean years of bloodshed and the destruction of the Venezuelan infrastructure, and would also fail to install a stable, United States-friendly government.

If this scenario is the most bloody and destructive, it is probably the least likely to take place. The Trump administration has shown little desire to initiate conventional ground wars, much less wars of occupation. The Venezuelan military is overwhelmingly behind Maduro, and will doubtlessly inflict unacceptable casualties on an American invasion force. Perhaps most critically, America's allies in the Organization of American States (OAS), including Columbia and Brazil, have indicated that they do not want a United States invasion of this sort. While Trump may surprise us yet again with his absurd changes in foreign policy, this scenario - barring unexpected changes in the situation in the United States and South America - is not in the cards.

2) Arming and training of local guerilla forces. Seen before in Nicaragua 1981, Cuba 1961, Afghanistan 1980, and Syria 2013.



Des Moines Catholic Workers, Eddie Bloomer, Ruth Hart, and Frank Cordaro stand against the United States Empire's violent interventions in Latin America.

The United States government has a long and sordid history of training, arming, and equipping right-wing dissidents to wage guerilla wars against non-United States-aligned regimes, especially in Latin America. While the government has largely pulled back from this policy in Latin America since the Iran-Contra scandal of the Reagan years, the Obama administration armed and equipped Salafi jihadist fighters in the Syrian Civil War from 2012 to at least 2015. This method of intervention has the advantage of leaving the direct dirty work of war to other actors, and is less likely to bring about public backlash in the United States.

The United States government is currently shipping arms to hard-right dissidents in Venezuela hidden in containers purportedly containing "humanitarian aid." While investigative media outlets have yet to find evidence that Venezuelan dissidents are being trained by the United States, this broad category of intervention is absolutely happening in the country, at least as recently as March. What remains to be seen is how far this policy escalates. Should Colombia and Brazil allow right-wing guerillas to pass through their borders with Venezuela, we may see the beginning of a small-scale civil war there yet. Trump's selection of Elliot Abrams as special envoy to Venezuela, looms ominously over the country, as Abrams is a relic of the Reagan administration who helped oversee right-wing death squads in El Salvador in the 1980s. United States-backed, right-wing guerillas have committed crimes against humanity in almost every situation they were employed. They were responsible for child rape and genocide in El Salvador, massacres in Nicaragua, mass political executions in Chile, and the enslavement of women and children in Syria. here can be no doubt that any United States attempt to increase arms shipments or training to right-wing forces in Venezuela will mean the murder of some segment of the population there.

Continued on page 11



The Des Moines Catholic Worker community showing support for Anthony, our youngest member and expert scientist!



Ryna-Ria and Jakob have begun the gardening season! Stay tuned for updates on the Des Moines Catholic Worker community gardens.



Scenes from an adventure to Chiapas, Mexico (see p. 8)



We love our volunteers!



We will not miss digging out the van in the snow and ice!



A visit to Wallyhouse in Honolulu, Hawaii with Barbara and David.



Faith and Resistance Retreat and Witness group photo; it was a success!

From Des Moines to Chiapas, Mexico and Back

Ryna-Ria Ignacio and Jakob Whitson share reflections about their journey overland to Chiapas, Mexico as they accompanied Richard Flamer of Casa de Camillo Torres Catholic Worker Community in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico with the purpose of delivering carpentry tools to several shops Richard has helped form.

A Shower of Rusty Metal

by Jakob Whitson

I put the van in park in front of Phil Berrigan House. It was 2 a.m., but the street lights made it feel like daytime. I stepped out of the van while simultaneously thanking God for our safe arrival back in Des Moines. The trip was long; time seemed to drag on in the unforgettable maroon upholstery ship, and I was happy to say my last goodbye. A new name would soon be in its title.

The trip started with little fanfare and not that much planning, on our part at least. Richard arrived in Des Moines after a grueling three days of van repair in Omaha. A 2005 Chevrolet cargo van would be our home for the next couple days, or so we thought.

Southern Iowa received a late November snow storm, but the roads were cleared. Kansas City was congested by rush hour traffic. Southern Oklahoma hills tested the engine's strength, and the bright casinos displayed the van's rear wheel quarter panel rust. Ryna-Ria took comfortable naps in the blacked out cargo space.

In our next stop, Jim, a retired professor, welcomed us in San Antonio. San Antonio Ethiopian food filled our bellies, and a comfortable bed prepared us for the next leg of the journey. Texas is the second biggest state in the United States, and my bones felt it. A glimpse of the Houston Catholic Worker broadened our awareness of the Catholic Worker spectrum. Palm trees greeted us in Brownsville, Texas, where an surprise four-day pit stop awaited us.

Because it weighed too much and lacked back windows, border patrol rejected our van. We felt the failure. Richard was our guide. Then Ryna-Ria spotted a 1980s GMC conversion van in the parking lot of a big box store. A day and a half later, we were in Mexico, happy enough. The cores of old volcanoes dotted the dusty scenery. What an adventure!

At this point, pothole after pothole caused a shower of rusty metal to fall from the van's interior upon my bare feet. Orange groves filled my lungs with their pungent fragrance. The port city of Tampico displayed a different side of Mexico, dry, dusty, grimy, and malodorous. I was sure an oasis existed, there are always oases.

Vera Cruz, and then an eight hour traffic jam, put a damper on our day, but not before a flat tire could seal it. Tuxtla Gutiérrez is a 70 degree difference from Iowa. San Cristobal de Las Casas welcomed us with mild weather, oak and pine trees in every direction.

Casa de Camillo Torres preserved its beauty as it aged. Avocados, limes, vegetables, and dogs greeted us at the gate. There was a fire burning inside, and a freshly cooked meal awaited us. Araceli is a wonderful chef, and much more. Three days passed, and the road called us back.

A bribe was paid and a beach was walked on the journey home.

Feeling of Gratitude

By Ryna-Ria Ignacio

The morning of the 28th of November, we were sitting in anticipation near the front door of the Berrigan house in Des Moines, slurping on our warm butternut squash soup, waiting for Richard Flamer to return with the van so that we could finally begin this journey down to Mexico. This was my first time traveling to another country; how exciting!

As we were eating, I was trying to let go of any kind of expectations or predictions that were arising.

In this moment, and throughout the entirety of our journey, I reminded myself, "I have to be open and grateful. I have to surrender all sense of control. Whatever God would like for us to experience on this trip will be a chance for inspiration and growth."

Richard finally arrived in the red cargo van. I opened the door to the back seat and found a dark,



Ryna-Ria celebrates upon arrival after a long trip

windowless cave with a booth surrounded by shadows of tools and things I could not identify at the moment. Full of excitement, I hopped in and created a comfy nest, preparing for the long road ahead of us.

Without windows in the back, it was difficult to hear past the roaring of the engine (I spent a lot of time sitting at the edge of my seat trying to listen to the many stories being shared), and having mistakenly taken a drink of "Sleep Aid" syrup instead of cold medicine, I found myself falling in and out of sleep often, and I lost track of where we were over time. However, one thing that I was definitely conscious for was when we got pulled over because a cop was bored!

We made our way San Antonio, Texas to meet a couple of Richard's good friends, Jim and Patty. They shared with us their beautiful home and garden of many bird feeders, wind chimes, flowers, fruit trees, veggies, and chickens. We spent most of our day enjoying the nice weather and listening to Jim's experience of raising goats and making cheese. Their home was a good place to rest.

We arose before the sun the next day and made our way to the Houston Catholic Worker. We opened the door to see Louise and another community member fly around us trying to meet their many guests' needs. I found my way to the garden by passing through a dining room and was given a tour by two women and a child that were living there. I grabbed a few books and newsletters and left to continue our journey.

We spent four nights in Brownsville, Texas, going through so many obstacles to get past the border. We needed to switch to a passenger van, so we spent another night in Motel 6 to start looking for a new vehicle the next day.

We began the day by going to mass for the first day of Advent. We ate napoles and potato tacos at Brownsville Cafe and drove around to look for passenger vans. Then we took a break from our busy day and walked on Boca Chica beach.

The next day, we were able to drive a new van. I was excited about the windows, but not so excited about the squeaking door, which sang the whole way there and back.

On the fifth of December, we finally made it past the border and through Matamoros, Mexico. We drove past many fields, vibrantly colored homes, shacks, and restaurants.

We then made our way through a city named Tampico, where I began to see more healthy, luscious green life, including trees that carried spanish moss. We drove through Naranjos, and saw many rows of orange trees. Richard told us about the bees that travel through here and how their honey has a hint of an orange flavor from collecting the nectar from orange blossoms. We stopped by a booth to buy some of this honey and some sweet vanilla to bring home to our friends and family.

Not too long afterwards, we were stuck in traffic on the highway for about eight hours because of road construction. The sickening smell of long lines of semi-trucks filled the air around us, and people were getting out of their cars to talk and walk around to see what was going on. Some families from nearby took this as an opportunity to sell some food and drinks.

Once we finally were free from the traffic, we found rest and shelter at "Hotel Angeles," where the hallways were decorated with plants and offered the coldest of showers.

Continuing on the next day, we passed many Oxxo convenience stores and Pemex gas stations. We continued on with other obstacles, including losing the tread on on a tire, but luckily, it was noticed by two men in a service truck, and they helped us replace it. This was not the last tire issue we were to experience on the trip, and although these were not the most enjoyable experiences, it brought us to pause and fully absorb the moment and the beautiful environment that surrounded us.

It took a several days to finally arrive in Chiapas, but we made it! We were greeted by the fresh smell of the pine trees that covered the mountain leading up to Richard and Araceli's lovely ranch. We were welcomed by Araceli and their sweet dogs. We enjoyed fresh fruits and delicious home cooked meals. We shared a lot of conversations, many of them guided by translations by Jakob, and spent some time late one evening laying out by their (in-progress) retreat center, enjoying the clear, starry night. Araceli shared some of her homemade soaps with us, which she sells through a local organic co-op. We spent a lot of our days exploring the streets and markets of San Cristobal de las Casas.

Our journey back home was just as eventful as the journey there. Rough, bumpy roads caused the struts to blow out, rust to fly down from the ceiling, and the center console to occasionally fall off, spilling Jakob's coffee and my hot tea all over the floor. Added to this were cops soliciting us for a bribe of 4,000 pesos, then a flat tire, then a cold night in the back of the van in a sleeping bag, finally waking up early one day to walk along the Coast of Esmerelda. A lot of time was spent learning and re-learning things about one another, jamming out to Bob Marley, Sanskrit mantras, and Latin vibes to keep each other awake and present.

We made our way to visit Jakob's hometown, Pratt, Kansas and reunited with his family. We found sweet shelter and comfort there and made our way back to Des Moines the next day.

Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! I got to see a lot of towns with their friendly churches and people. People got to know this young person that was sitting in the back of their church. It was me.

Where did I come from and why? So I got to eat with them. I told them I ran away from

Home. I stayed back in schools and failed the draft, and I was hurt a lot most of my life. Then I learned it was easy to put out your hand and thumb for a ride.

It was okay in the early days before the 1980s, then I encountered a state trooper just outside of Galesburg, Illinois.

By then I was a Catholic Worker from Des Moines, Iowa. Before that, my first Catholic Worker was the Mustard Seed in Worcester, Massachusetts. Before that, I never know about Catholic Workers, just friendly people. Their churches never had much money or none. I would see if I could work for a day or camp out and see if I could find easy work for a day.

I've never been to England, where my mother was born. I don't remember how many Catholic Workers there are. I remember she took a trip with some or all of my sisters to show them England and her family.

In the first World War my mother served in the British Navy shoveling coal into the burner of a battleship. Then in World War II, my mother's brother served in the British army, I guess. Mother served as a nurse.

Mom met a Canadian named Norman that flew a Canadian bomber to England, but he flew a British bomber to bomb the Germans. Somehow, Mom was going home and Dad was going back to his base. Both were on the same train. Mom got off first, and Dad stayed on and got off later near the base.

I don't know where in New York Dad's family lived and died. Mother recalled that Dad recalled his mother's name was Margaret. You see, Dad's father came home from the trenches of the first World War with influenza. It affected and killed a lot of others since Dad was a young kid. He was put in an office

after their wooden house burned down. Dad said the kids had to spell their last names the best they could.

In World War II, Dad flew in a B-17 bomber as a radio person. At the end of the war, Mom came to the United States and was a nurse and married Dad. I don't know where they lived before I was born.

I was born in Manchester, New Hampshire's Queen City. There is another Manchester in England. I wonder if there is a Catholic Worker there, as it's got a lot of history.



Photo by Al Viola

The place where he was when he was a child when his parents died was run by nuns in New York state.

I'm into Native American Indians. I had a friend in Massachusetts named Tuna, but I never knew what tribe he and his father were from. He died when he was young, and his father went back to his tribe. He was a good friend.

I also had a good friend here in Des Moines, Iowa, who had a family on the Rosebud Reservation. He was a Lakota Sioux. His name was Howard Crow Eagle, and he came up to the Catholic Worker a couple times to work in Des Moines caring for young and old people, to help them eat and get shelter.

He was my escort to Pine Ridge, Wounded Knee, Rosebud, and other school and Kili radio stations for the Indians around them.

I've had friends die at times. I've worked in the town cemetery and visited the Catholic cemetery.

I have a DVD along with other DVDs that are about religion. There is one called "Be in Her Footsteps: The Story of Saint Kateri Kekakwita," a Mohawk in the 1620s. A group of Jesuits traveled from Canada where they were living. They traveled to New York state to the Indian village on the Mohawk River to baptize whoever wanted it. After a while, the Jesuits left the area to find more and went back sometime later when smallpox showed up. It killed her family and others. She started walking north towards Quebec, Canada, where the Jesuit priests were living. They were also known as "Black Robes," and today there's a church. She made it to the Jesuits as the scars of the smallpox disappeared and her skin looked better.

I'm proud to know of Saint Kateri Kekakwita, Peter Maurin, Dorothy Day, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, and John Lennon.

I thank you for being around and starting something nice.

I love and miss you, mother (died at 92), Rose M. Searah. Dad died before Mom, Andrew J. Searah.

Other people in my family that I remember are me, Norman S., David S. and his wife, Susan, brother Lindsay S., husband Dana S. and wife Pamela, husband Mark S. and wife Kathleen, husband Edward S. and wife Susan, wife Constance S. and husband Michael, sister Bernadette S., wife Deborah S. and husband John, sister Frances S., sister Andrea (deceased), wife Gale S. and husband Mark. There were a lot of grandchildren too.

I'm sorry for all the bad winter weather snow, cold weather, floods, tornadoes, ice on roads, on rivers, and rising water. I pray that we don't have a flood like in Noah's Ark's day today!

Thank you.

Frank's Historic Dump

by Frank Cordaro

In December, Ruby Montoya and I took a 28 hour long road trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Marquette University for a historical archive material dump at the National Catholic Worker movement's official archives, hosted in the Marquette University library. I've been sending material regarding the Des Moines Catholic Worker there for over 40 years!

The whole transaction of 16 boxes from our van to the third floor of the library, where the Catholic Worker archives are located, took no more than 30 minutes. Phil Runke, the official Catholic Worker archivist, was there to welcome us and the stuff. Phil and I started our work regarding the Catholic Worker movement the same time. We also both had mothers who were our biggest supporters, as for years we had both shown up at the Midwest Sugar Creek Catholic Worker retreat with our moms.

The unloading of all this "stuff" is all a part of my most recent move back to Dingman House. I've moved seven times from one Des Moines Catholic Worker house to the next over the years. This time, I voluntarily moved back to Dingman House and turned over the residence and library for Berrigan House to Jakob Whitson and Ryna-Ria Ignacio, new community members who both bring unique gifts to the work. They have young eyes and new spirits, which is very exciting for the community.

The move marks a change going on in me and how I see myself as a Des Moines Catholic Worker. Ten years ago, Berrigan House was where I saw myself retiring. Now that I am 68 and closer to real retirement (whatever that means), I feel a need to get rid of all the extra "stuff" tying me down in my life and confine all that I own into one room. I

now am living on the second floor of Dingman House. It's taken me several months to make the transition. Thank you to all who helped with this slow motion move! I had to sort out a lot of old stuff.

The last of my stuff at Berrigan House was the archive files I'd been collecting since 1986! Years ago, I had already sent our archival materials from our early years, 1976-1886. With this trip to Marquette, a big load is off of my plate, as I am no longer responsible for years of archival stuff I've been saving. I've been calling it a "historic dump," archivally speaking, but for me personally, it's all part of the freedom I'm getting by living in one room with all my stuff, at Dingman House.

With this addition of archive materials, the running joke among Catholic Workers is that Frank and the Des Moines Catholic Worker will have more "stuff" weight-wise than anyone else in the national collection, including Dorothy Day! Among all this stuff lies some hidden gems, including the hidden early years of the Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement's papers. I was the sole staff person in Des Moines for CCI during those years. Its state headquarters were in Waterloo, and Joe Fagan was still a priest! Years of audio and videos of speaking gigs and actions were also included in the archives. There are audio recordings of 90 percent of my weekly homilies as a priest for 19 years! There are files of organizing notes and news coverage of hundreds of actions over the years, plus files for all the projects, community concerns, and all other issues that come with being a Catholic Worker for over 40 years! Then add all the funny relics I've sent to Phil over the years, most of them yet to be discovered! Truly, our community has a rich history, and evidence of that history was found in droves in this archive transfer.



"Honor Vets Ground Drones" Third Annual Armed Forces Day Rally & Direct Action

Saturday May 18 at 3 p.m.

IA Air Guard Drone Command Center, 3100 McKinley Ave, Des Moines, IA

Join the Des Moines Vets for Peace and the Catholic Workers for our "Honor Vets Ground Drones" 3rd Annual Armed Forces Day Rally & Direct Action at the main entrance of the IA Air Guard Drone Command Center.

For more info contact:

Frank Cordaro, DMCW, frank.cordaro@gmail.com
515.490.2490

Gilbert Landolt, DMCW & Pres. DM Vets For Peace,
peacevet@hotmail.com 515.657.0354

Mike Smith, Des Moines Catholic Worker, 1976-1978, Rest In Peace

By Ann Smith

Mike Smith was one of the earliest members of the Des Moines Catholic Worker community. After a visit to Des Moines in 2017, we published an article by Mike from the April 1977 issue of the Via Pacis. Mike died last year. Below you will find a piece by his wife, Ann Smith, and a note from Des Moines Catholic Worker Cofounder, Joe DaVia.

Mike Smith passed away on December 28, 2018 after an eight-year journey with Parkinson's disease. A couple of years ago, after being admitted to hospice at home, Mike planned his Celebration of Life service and designated the Des Moines Catholic Worker and our local Catholic Worker house as recipients of donations. I'm happy that you will benefit from his respect for the work you continue to do.

Mike's connection to the Catholic Worker Movement began back in 1976. After he became a member of Alcoholics Anonymous in June of 1975, he was in need of purpose. His uncle, a really cool priest, suggested he help out at the Catholic Worker house in Milwaukee. Not long after that, Mike moved to the Des Moines Catholic Worker. He remembered Eddie Polich picking him up at the bus station. He and Eddie have remained dear friends to this day.

Mike moved into a downstairs room of our first house, the now Phil Berrigan House at 713 Indiana Ave. I joined him a few months later. Frank Cordaro, Joe DaVia, Jacquee Dickey, Eddie Polich, and I lived on the premises in those days. We served women and children.

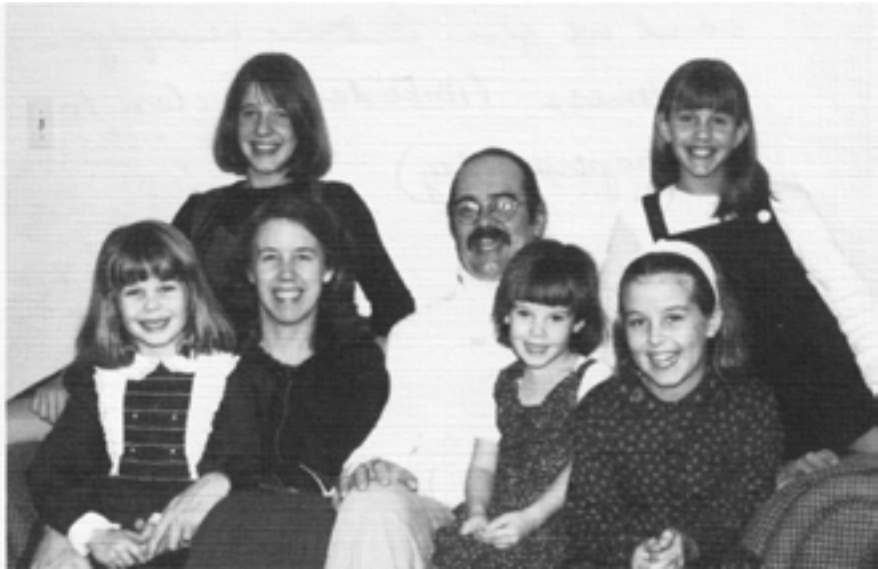
After a year or so there, we moved to the Kansas City Catholic Worker where we helped Beth Seberger run a soup kitchen.

Mike really loved the work he did as a Catholic Worker. Even though he hadn't been a Catholic Worker in over 40 years, his fond memories of that time became apparent in September of last year, a few months before he died.

He was writing a little autobiography for his

high school graduation's 50th reunion. He couldn't speak and had to spell each word letter by letter on his alphabet board. He also needed the help of his hospice volunteer to write it down because he couldn't write. It took the two of them a few hours to write four paragraphs. It's significant that Mike devoted two of his four paragraphs to his years as a Catholic Worker.

He wrote, "Another date of importance is March of '76 when I joined the Catholic Workers,



which is the far left of organized or unorganized Christianity. I was basically a self-deprecating individual with hopes of being an intellectual who wanted to do some good in the world.

I still maintain the ideals from those days: Dorothy Day's critique of mainstream Christian values, the need for revolution, and the feeling of helplessness."

After his years as a Catholic Worker, Mike and I moved back to Bloomington, Indiana, where we had met, and we raised five daughters. Mike found meaning in his family, his playwriting, and then as a self-styled "shaman." AA continued to be his main source of deep spiritual support, and he influenced a couple of generations of men in that program.

Mike's commitment to AA was amazing.

Through his 33 and a half years in the program, he attended three meetings a week, unless he absolutely could not attend (if we were traveling, for instance). The last two years or so we had three meetings a week at our house because it was too difficult or impossible to get Mike out of the house. **

I hope his idealism, aspirations, and generosity inspire many others to follow in his footsteps to serve others through the Catholic Worker Movement.

*So far, \$1,800 have been donated to the Des Moines Catholic Worker in Mike's name. Mike left another \$7,500 to the Des Moines Catholic Worker in his will! ** One of the best things happening at Berrigan House is a weekly AA meeting, attended mostly by men from Bethel Mission. We believe that Mike Smith's spirit has had a hand in this!*

Mike was a key part of the early days of the Catholic Worker in Des Moines. I remember that for a time he was the "House Mother." Frank was busy or out of town, Eddie worked nights and slept a few hours in the day, and Malcolm

and I were working. Mike responded to anything that happened throughout the day. Looking back at it, he was probably trying to squirrel away a few uninterrupted hours to write. Those uninterrupted hours at the Worker were rare, with the daily events and random miracles that are part of life in a shelter for homeless women and families. Mike was the guy who kept it going every day, thoughtfully responding with his personal grace. Mike's spirituality was more based in Bill Wilson than Dorothy Day, but Mike's personal grace blended in and became a key part of the new Catholic Worker community.

Joe Da Via, Cofounder of the Des Moines Catholic Worker, now living in Aiken, North Carolina

Rest In Peace, Luke

Luke Swann was born December 8, 1982 in Washington DC to Wendy Vasquez and Bobby Swann. He grew up in Des Moines at the Catholic Worker, where he made his lifelong friends, more brothers and sisters than friends, Omar, Landon, Fernando, Julius, Josh, Jordan, Kary, Jann, Rhashida, Janelle and Shawn. Luke grew up a child of community, the Catholic Worker, and the Friends Meeting, and he always felt grounded there.

Luke died way too young, and he leaves behind a multitude of people who loved him and his capacity to make a friend out of anyone and everyone, to set a goal and head straight for it, to put his family, and especially his children, ahead

of everything, to make deep friendships that were more like family than anything else.

Luke got dealt a lot of rough cards in life, and not all of his decisions were good ones, but he always managed to look at his situation clearly, bounce back, and keep it moving. He was brutally honest with himself and others, willing to take the consequences of his actions right up to the end. He had a clear idea of what it is to be a man, and he lived it. He was fiercely loyal, passionate about his family, both here and in DC, and devoted to his children and his adored sister, Kaydee. We who love him will miss him forever.

Contact:
Wendy Vasquez
wendyvasquez1227@gmail.com



August 1988 cover of the Via Pacis (left to Right) Top Row: Omar and Fernando Bojorquez, and Luke Bobbitt Swann. Bottom Row: Unknown Guest, Nora Bojorquez, Ben Fallon and Katie Bobbitt.

Dale Tarr, Beloved Friend, Father, and Grandfather, Rest In Peace



by Jakob Whitson

Dale began his life in the early fall, October 25, 1951, and he left his body on January 4, 2019. Dale was not only a regular visitor at the Des Moines Catholic Worker, he was also the father of Anna and Jeff Wheeler. Dale often came in to assure the community we were cooking good food, a taste tester of sorts. He could definitely tell the difference between good, excellent, and bad food. Several of the Catholic Workers hit the mark, but often we did not, and he let us know when we didn't.

I have a many fond memories of Dale, but one sticks out in my mind. In the middle of the summer last year, I was sitting outside of Dingman House on a particularly muggy and hot day.

It was very early in the morning, around three in the morning, if I were to guess. I could not sleep because of the heat and a small case of insomnia. I thought I would be alone for my evening stroll around the outside of the house, but I was not for long. Dale came strolling up the brick path, and he obviously couldn't sleep that night either. We had a heart to heart conversation; it was one about the afterlife, pain, and purpose of life. We also spoke about his foot problems and the eeriness of the hour.

Dale will be missed as a regular fixture around our house. His grateful smile will continue to lighten up Bishop Maurice Dingman House even though we cannot see it in person anymore. God bless Dale Tarr!

Community Life Is Hard: Mistakes Made, Lessons Learned

A bad thing happened in our community this past summer. A core community member violated our sexual relationship policy with an intern. The core member was asked to leave the community two days after the violation was brought to our attention. Sides were taken within the community. The shock of our former community member’s actions and internal division paralyzed us. Our community’s trust and generosity in each other was tested and strained.

In the weeks and months that followed the affair, snowballing consequences were suffered by everyone involved. The expulsion of our community member and our communal inability to mend internal relationships multiplied the consequences. It also left unchallenged false and ugly claims about our community, as individuals and as a whole. This resulted in negative consequences at both the regional and national Catholic Worker level.

Six months ago, we chose to seek help from the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center, and we’ve been making progress.

We have some communal regrets. We regret that we let our fears block our community from proactively giving our offending community member an opportunity to face an accounting for their violation within the communal circle. We denied ourselves the opportunity to tell them about the hurt and pain that their actions set off for everyone in the community.

As a community, after a lot of work and

prayer, we’re determined to learn from our mistakes, make amends where we can, and recommit ourselves to the integrity of our communal circle and to our sexual relationship policy.

Our community circle and the community formation that takes place within it is the heartbeat and soul of our community’s hospitality. We understand the circle to be the gathering of people and the loving process by which we govern our community. All of our work, messaging, purpose, and needs, both personal and communal, are worked out within this community circle. Anything and everything about our personal and communal lives, including money, alcohol, drug use, and sex, is open for discussion if it affects the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

As a community, we recommit ourselves to the below sexual relationship policy:

“Love is the Measure,” and in our community radical love is demanded. Radical love is love that’s committed to gospel discipleship and is accountable to the community and the mission and work of the circle.

The sexual relationship policies and practices of Catholic Worker communities falls in a continuum, from a strict adherence to the Bishops and official Catholic teachings to communities where the boundaries of sexual behavior are not limited to procreation and where sexual behavior is based on freedom and responsibility. On this side of the Catholic continuum, the core issue is not “who” you love, but “how” you love that matters.

Over the years, the Des Moines Catholic Worker has identified with the “sexual freedom” side of this Catholic continuum. Sexual freedom practiced in our community demands first of all, overt consent in all sexual relationships, communal accountability, and commitment to mitigating power imbalances within that relationship. To this end, all sexual relationships within the community are to be known to the community. As a rule, community members are forbidden from having sexual relationships with guests. Sexual relations with volunteers or interns must be discussed in a community meeting before any sexual contact occurs in order to ensure that any power imbalance can be eliminated.

In the end, the wisdom of the circle is the ultimate arbiter and will be judged on a case by case basis. As long as love is served, we are hitting the mark. Years of community life teaches that everything we do in community has an effect on the community, including sex, and is best done transparently.

It is with these thoughts in mind that we as a community hope to move forward and grow from this painful experience. We hope to ensure that we will hold true to this policy the next time communal conflict occurs, in order to make our community a healthier and safer space for everyone, a space where radical love can thrive and flourish once again.

Signed, the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

STEGER cont’d from p. 1

All eight were taken to Polk County Jail. Al Burney bailed out. The other seven stayed in jail overnight, and all but Ruth pled guilty before a jail judge on Monday morning and were fined between \$100 and \$1,000, then set free. Both Ruth and Al are planning on taking their case to a jury trial. Stay tuned!

A big pat on the back goes out to all of the Des Moines Catholic Workers; it took the whole community to make this happen. Big thank you goes to Jakob and Ryna-Ria for preparing all the meals! The food was over the top!

As a totally new person to the movement, I feel so blessed! I learned how to be a support person on a retreat. This included learning how to support those in jail, helping to prepare meals for the guests, organizing hospitality, holding discussions with the activists, and taking part in the hour-long Skype session with the Kings Bay Plowshares. It was amazing hearing the experiences of the two sisters, Ardeeth and Carol. Meeting fellow Catholic Workers and making connections to stay in touch was so important! The faith and resistance testimonies were encouraging, and I cannot wait to continue to get to know these and many others in the movement. I am grateful for our community for giving their time and gifts, as we could not have done it without each other! I am looking forward to many more retreats and community building opportunities. It was an amazing weekend, and we would like to thank everyone who was involved for lending their time, gifts, and talents!

GILBERT and PLATTE cont’d from p. 1

and weapon treaties, small guns, and the domination processes of space, land, water and sky, among other issues.

Therefore, every political, judicial, and direct action, every witness of justice and peace, every demonstration, every withdrawal of funds from investment firms, corporations, and banks that contribute to these ongoing crimes against humanity and Earth, every prayer and service rendered, every plowshare action and testimony given in the courts, every legislative policy made, and every nonviolent life led add to preserving the planet and making the world better. It is Gospel living in its fullest. It is the joyful way of life promised to us. This was our message during the retreat, and this is our challenge in living. The young and seasoned Catholic Workers, the Veterans for Peace, two Minnesota Valve Turners, four Kings Bay Plowshares who spoke via skype, world-wide traveler Kathy Kelly’s presentation, rally attendees, and many supporters renewed our spirits, energy, and commitments.

SUGANUMA cont’d from p. 2

It is imperative that the Catholic Worker movement both acknowledges these acts of violence committed by the state and takes a firm stance against the current prison system. At a personal level, Catholic Workers do not define people by their worst actions and decisions. Instead, we seek out the humanity in everyone, no matter their past history, current issues, or criminal record. While restorative justice may not always be possible, we should seek to advocate for prison abolition and a truly rehabilitative process for anyone accused of violating another human being in any way, shape, or form.

The prison system will not be abolished until the current economic system that forces people into desperate survival scenarios is dismantled. However, that does not mean we cannot do anything to help incarcerated people now. Legally advocating for prison reforms such as paying incarcerated workers a living wage, restoring voting rights, and decriminalizing nonviolent drug charges is a good start, but passing legislation also requires monetary and political power that is not in the reach of most people. On a more accessible level, anyone can work to restore the dignity that has been stripped by the state by reaching out to incarcerated people and forming real human relationships with them. Many of us at the Des Moines Catholic Worker write to incarcerated penpals on a regular basis. Eddie, for example, has been writing penpals on the inside for many years with Iowa CURE. The Central Iowa DSA Prison Abolition Working group also recently started a prison letter-writing project that many other Des Moines Catholic Workers participate in. These sessions happen every third Wednesday of the month at Trinity United Methodist Church from 6-8pm and are open to the public. One contact we met through this project is Travis Wolfkill, who has contributed some writings to this issue of the Via Pacis!

May you enjoy his work and strive to bring incarcerated people’s issues to the forefront so that the world can experience a greater sense of justice!

STALL cont’d from p. 3

What is more difficult to assess is the long-term efficacy of this strategy in Venezuela. While the United States-backed Contra guerillas successfully forced the Sandinista government of Nicaragua from power in 1990, United States attempts to destabilize Cuba along similar lines failed in the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 and similarly faltered, more recently, in its support of right-wing rebels against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. Thus the arming of proxies, while destructive, was once a historically attractive option for the United States government, but

may not be sufficient to overwhelm the Venezuelan state.

3) Proxy/Partial Military intervention. Seen before in Libya 2011, Syria 2013, Somalia 1993, Kosovo and the Balkans 1994

“Humanitarian interventionism” was the slogan of the Clinton presidency’s military foreign policy in the 1990s, and it saw a resurgence in the Obama years. Typically, American air and naval forces, along with very small numbers of ground special forces, are deployed in the context of an existing conflict to tip the scale in favor of the faction closest to United States interests under the guise of safeguarding civilians in the conflict. The Trump administration has followed this precedent in Syria and may find it a lower-risk option than full-scale war in Venezuela.

This sort of interventionism is typically employed by the United States when a military conflict on the ground is already underway. Should any sort of civil unrest occur in Venezuela similar to the protests of 2015-16, if military defections of any scale occur, or if a right-wing guerilla campaign gets off the ground, we may very well see the Trump administration employ cruise missiles, drones, or even conventional aerial bombardment on military and infrastructure targets in Venezuela, with devastating effects. However, any direct use of American military power risks international condemnation, even from Western states that have backed American economic sanctions on Venezuela so far. Therefore, this scenario is only likely to occur should mass civil strife or civil war develop and the Organization of American States and key United States allies in Europe back military strikes.

In any of the above scenarios, it is the Venezuelan people who will suffer the most. United States intervention has never been helpful to the people in non-Western countries, and almost always results in the mass death of civilians. We in the belly of the American beast thus have a duty to condemn our government’s attempt at intervention in whatever manner we can, which is why protests like the one organized by the Mid-Iowa Chapter of Veterans for Peace are so important. We in the United States, even if we do not feel as though our actions influence the decisions of our government, benefit the most from the neocolonial world system and suffer the least of its consequences. We live relatively comfortably in houses subsidized by the extraction of resources from the third world, while those in the third world die in houses blown up by United States bombs. It is thus our moral obligation to protest and witness against the empire we live in.

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The Voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

VOLUNTEERS:

Individuals and work crews
for hospitality (serving food,
cleanup), cleaning and gen-
eral inside and outside main-
tenance . . . without them, we
burn out.

FOOD:

Fruit, Vegetables, Meat and
Fish, Milk, Cheese, Salted
Butter, Olive Oil, Sugar, Cof-
fee, Creamer, Juice (sugar
free), Salt, Black Pepper,
Fresh Garlic, Salad dress-
ing, Soups and Stews (both
canned and fresh). Leftovers
from weddings, funerals and
other social gatherings. . . .

MEAL PROVIDERS:

Provide a meal for 50-70
people once a month!

Call or email for current
openings. 515-214-1030, dm-
catholicworker@gmail.com

HEALTH AND HY-

GIENE:

Feminine Hygiene Items,
Diapers, Baby Formula,
Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Multivi-
tamins, Antibiotic Ointment,
Band-Aids, Lip balm.

TOILETRIES:

Disposable Razors, Shaving
Cream, Shampoo, Condi-
tioner, Lotion, Deodorant,
Soap, Toothpaste. (Small
sizes preferred for handout.
. . .) Toothbrushes and Toilet
Paper.

CLOTHING:

Underwear, Socks, T-shirts,
Sweatshirts, Hoodies, Coats,
Work Pants. (All Sizes—espe-
cially big . . .) Sleeping Bags,
Blankets.

HOUSEHOLD

SUPPLIES:

Bleach, Laundry Detergent,

Environmentally-Friendly

Dish Soap, Murphy’s Oil
Soap, Pinesol, Trash Bags,
Brooms, Rugs, Candles,
Energy-Efficient Light Bulbs,
Aluminum Foil, Plastic Wrap,
Sandwich and Freezer Bags,
Bath Towels, Playing Cards,
Candles, Phone Chargers.

HOUSE REPAIRS:

With four old houses, there
are plenty of projects large
and small. We invite do-it-
yourselves—individuals or
groups—with skills in carpen-
try, plumbing, painting, electri-
cal, etc. to come in, look over
our housing needs, and choose
a project. Bring your own tools
if possible.

LIBRARY:

Peace and Justice books for
the Berrigan House Library.

CASH MONIES:

Cash donations are essential
to pay our property taxes,
utilities, repair and mainte-
nance of property, upkeep
and gas for two vans, pur-
chase of needed supplies, our
community gardening and
for the continued publication
and mailing of the via pacis,
a good 20% of our annual
expenses.

DMCW WEBSITE

For up to date news & info on
the community, the Rachel Cor-
rie Project, Berrigan House and
Occupy the World Food Prize
visit the DMCW web page: [www.
dmcatholicworker.org/](http://www.dmcatholicworker.org/).



**Third Annual Armed
Forces Day Rally
and Direct Action
May 18**
more info on pg 9

Charlie Mertes holds a replica of a military drone that he made for protests at the Drone Command Center in Des Moines.